how, and whether the children born of the marriage were legitimate and could inherit under the law, were questions directly connected with this enquiry.

The recognised method of contracting a marriage among Christians was to have it solemnised before ministers of religion. But with the rapid growth of sects and the free use of excommunications it was difficult to say whether a particular individual was a minister or not and though ordained whether he still retained his competency to solemnise marriages. It was with a view to avoid difficulties that might arise on account of such marriages that all civilised countries had made provision for civil marriages. The time had come for enacting a comprehensive marriage law in Travancore also. It might perhaps be argued that the evils pointed out could be prevented by amending the Registration Regulation prohibiting Sub-Registrars from registering contracts purporting to be agreements for effecting or dissolving marriages. But this was not easy unless the Regulation was radically amended since there were statutory provisions enabling the Nayars and the Ezhavas to make use of the Registration Regulation for purposes connected with their marriages. A comprehensive marriage law was the only remedy to check the growing evils pointed out. There were similar enactments elsewhere, for instance, the Indian Christian Marriage Act, the Indian Divorce Act and the Native Converts Marriage Dissolution Act in British India and the Civil Marriage Regulation in Cochin. The member, however, was not of the view that civil marriages should be the only form of marriage especially when there were many who would have their marriages solemnised under the auspices of a church. Nor was he suggesting a legislation that would compel any minister to solemnise a marriage not approved by his church. His request was for a piece of legislation under which civil marriages would be permissible and available to people whose marriage the church may refuse to solemnise and also to those who might have scruples to get married in the only church available for them. The Regulation to be enacted should be comprehensive enough to deal with such subjects as nullity, restitution of conjugal rights, effect of conversion to Chistianity, method of bringing about dissolution and the like. The member also presented a copy of a Bill drafted by a committee appointed by the heads of the Anglican and Mar Thoma Churches to go into these questions, for reference, if necessary.

DEWAN'S REPLY: This, Mr. Eipe, does not seem to be a matter in which the Government should take the initiative. The proper course would seem to be for a non-official member of the Legislative Council to move the matter in the Council and bring in a private bill.

21. Promulgation of a law governing the civil rights of those who do not recognise caste or religious differences.

MRS. P. PALPU (*Nominated*) said that in many respects Travancore should be considered a model State. In education, equality of rights to men and women and in national awakening

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Travancore was making rapid strides towards progress. The only obstacle in its progress was the communal differences. Communal differences were fostered by communal laws. Until these differences disappeared Travancore could not hope to become a solid nation. There were in the State many who were prepared to abandon their communal laws and rules. But the fear that their life would become difficult if they forsook these laws deterred them from leading an independent life. Unless a person was a member of any particular community, his civil rights could not be defined." The member's request was that there should be a law defining and protecting the civil rights of persons who did not want to be members of any particular community but who wanted to live independent of any community. The ideal of every Government should be to help people in unifying themselves, at any rate not to check any tendencies in that direction. By enacting a law of the kind desired by the member, the Government would not be creating a new community but on the other hand would be doing away with several personal and communal laws. Such laws were few in British India. Even in Travancore, they were few in olden days. It was only recently that they increased in number. Agitations for temple entry, *satyagraha*, etc., had their origin in communal differences. There were many who were suffering on account of their communal laws. It was the duty of the Government to help these people by enacting a law protecting their civil rights.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mrs. Palpu, I do not know how many people there are who are concerned with this. This, again, seems to be a matter in which Government should not take the initiative.

22. Promotion of the cultivation of cocoanut and areca palms.

MR. MATTHAI MUTALALI (*Kunnattur taluk*) said that cocoanut cultivation played an important part in the economic life of the people of Travancore. The people in Travancore were small landholders deriving their income from their fields and cocoanut gardens. The fall in the price of cocoanuts and the fall in yield per cocoanut tree placed the poor landholder in a pitiable plight. The chief reason for the poor yield was the cocoanut pest which was devastating the cocoanut trees from one end of the State to the other. This has been admitted by the Agricultural Department and the Government. But it was regrettable that nothing substantial was done by the Department to eradicate the pest. The Mycologist was not able to find out ways for eradicating this evil and the average ryot was not in any way benefited by the Department of Agriculture in regard to the scientific cultivation of his gardens. It is stated that the area under cocoanut had increased from 499,666 acres in 1100 to 550,000 acres in 1106 but nowhere is it stated how much the yield has increased. Probably, the figurers would not have been very encouraging. The fall in the yield might, to a certain extent, be due to the fault of the cultivator himself. But the Agricultural Department was not immune from all responsibility. If the Department was not able to do anything substantial and tangible in the matter, the Government should lose no time in securing expert opinion

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